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ABSTRACT

The first in a 3-part series developed to assist the American Indian student in transferring successfully from a 2-year community college to a 4-year college or university, this handbook consists of 4 sections which answer the following questions: How do I prepare to transfer to a 4-year college or university? What must I do after the college/university has officially accepted me? How do I choose my courses and instructors? What can I do to insure success? Section I identifies sources of information (college advisors, professionals in the chosen field of study, school directories, tribal education offices), factors affecting the choice of institution (success of other Indians at the school, acceptance of transfer credits, presence of Indian faculty and courses, distance from home), and steps necessary prior to transferring. Section II provides suggestions for budgeting, housing, transportation, food, clothing and household necessities, and additional income after the college/university has accepted the transfer student. Section III recommends working closely with an advisor to plan a course of study to meet all graduation requirements. Section IV outlines elements important to college success: study habits, use of libraries, planning social life, and taking care of mind and body. (NEC)

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Continuing a College Education: A Guide for the American Indian Student

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Continuing a College Education: A Guide for the American Indian Student

by

Carol Minugh

National Center for Research in Vocational Education
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

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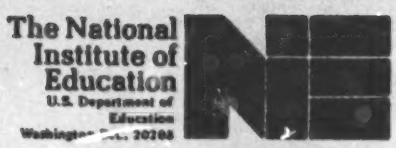
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)
Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (CRESS)
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003



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INTRODUCTION

This handbook was developed to assist the American Indian student in transferring successfully from a 2-year community college to a 4-year college or university. In order to accomplish this, three handbooks were developed for use by:

-the student

-the parents (family)

-the counselor

This student handbook is by no means comprehensive, but will provide information to assist the student in obtaining more specific information and assistance. It consists of four sections which answer the following questions:

How do I prepare to transfer to a 4-year college or university?

What must I do after the college/university has officially accepted me?

How do I choose my courses and instructors?

What can I do to insure success?

This handbook is designed to help the community college student who is considering transferring to a 4-year institution. It contains information which will help students make personal and academic decisions which will contribute to success in obtaining the degree of their choice. In addition to this handbook, the student should become familiar with the parent (family) and counselor handbooks. This will help the student understand the opportunities and potential problem areas addressed in these handbooks.

How do I prepare to transfer to a 4-year college or university?

Choosing a college or university to meet your specific educational requirements is essential to a successful learning experience while attending college and to success after graduation in your field of study. There are several sources of information which will be of help when making this vital decision, some of which include:

-your community college advisor

-professionals in the field of study you have chosen

-college and university directories

-your tribal education office

Community college advisors usually have catalogues and specific program information for most colleges within a given area or region. If they do not have the information, they will assist you in obtaining information on the institutions you are interested in attending. The advisor has had personal contact with many members of the admissions and counseling staff in the colleges.

The advisor also has knowledge of past successes or failures of students transferring into specific programs and can suggest programs in which students from your college have been successful. If there is a high rate of dropouts in a particular program, the program should be examined very carefully before you consider enrolling in it.

Talking with professionals in the field is another way to determine if a college or university is successful in your chosen program area. Your tribal government's education office or records center may have information on tribal members who have gone into the profession you have chosen, and could tell you how to get in touch with them. These professionals can also provide insight into what is expected of students and may suggest methods of overcoming specific problems such as admissions, coursework or understanding the professors. This contact may also provide opportunities for you to learn more about the

professional field and, in some cases, may provide opportunities for summer employment. The student should be aware of the fact that professionals may be partial to their own alma mater and that it may not necessarily be the best institution to attend for a particular field of study.

John Noon has written two useful guides for Indian students about to enter college, which can also be helpful for students transferring to a 4-year college. Both are available in the ERIC system; if your college has an ERIC microfiche collection, you can read them there. Their titles and ERIC numbers are on the last page of this handbook.

College and university directories are available in most libraries. These will provide information on the demographic characteristics of the college as well as general information and unique opportunities.

Your tribal education office is another source of important information about colleges and

universities. The record of Indian student success within the institution, as well as in each specific major, may tell you something about the program and indicate that you should examine it more carefully. The institution may be very successful with non-Indians, but if there is a low rate of success with Indian students, there may be a reason. Former students will be able to identify specific strengths and weaknesses of a program. The tribal education office maintains records on most tribal members attending or who have attended college. The education officer can be a source of information on how successful Indian students are, as well as identifying problem areas the education office has experienced with the institution or program.

Another factor in the choice of an institution is the amount of course work the college or university will allow you to transfer or will recognize for transfer credit toward the degree you are seeking. Each college (College of Law,

College of Education, etc.) may have different requirements for accepting community college credits. In addition, the requirements for transferring after the freshman and sophomore years may be different. Be sure to determine what your standing will be (sophomore or junior) in the institution.

An American Indian or Native American student organization may be crucial to your success in the institution. You should also find out if there are Indian people on the faculty, whether there are Indian Studies courses, and who will be teaching these courses. All of these factors may affect your overall success within the institution. It is also important to examine the structure of the Indian organization. Is it an organization which has both academic and social activities?

When choosing a college or university, the distance between the institution and your home may be an important consideration. If your

involvement with your family and tribe includes specific responsibilities which you will be expected (by yourself or by others) to carry out, even while you are attending college, you must either be close enough to take care of the responsibilities or have another person take care of them for you. Many students find it necessary to delegate family and tribal responsibilities to others during the time they are attending college. In addition, the family and tribe should be aware of the plans you have for your future and what has or will have to be sacrificed. This way they will not feel you are neglecting your responsibilities. If you have a family of your own (husband, wife, children), this consideration must be extended to them. They may also have family or tribal responsibilities which are not easily taken care of from a distant college. It is not always easy to fulfill your obligations at home and have a successful college experience at the same time. When choosing the institution you will attend, all of these factors must be carefully considered.

Steps necessary prior to transferring

1. Determine the qualifications necessary for admission (i.e. grade point average).
2. Determine what will be your financial obligation.
3. Identify your major and minor areas of study.
4. Evaluate your education in terms of what it will cost you in time, effort and money.
5. Identify specific time lines or deadlines the institution may have for the paperwork for obtaining financial aid, submitting admission applications, paying fees and tuition, and receiving transcripts.

Each of these steps will be made easier when you utilize the community college counselor/advisor. The following are some areas in which the counselor can be of help in getting information:

-admission requirements

-documents needed (birth certificate, health certificate, transcripts, etc.)

-availability of scholarships and other types of financial aid

-deadlines for applications

If you do not have a personal file, now is a good time to start one. Your filing system can be kept in a large binder or in a cardboard box. Some of the labels could be: budget, grades, housing records, documents, scholarship information, Indian Club information, and letters from home. This will help you in keeping your records where they are readily available. Your community college advisor may have further suggestions for this file.

Working with your advisor will be crucial in insuring a smooth, well-organized transfer from one college to another. In addition to providing information, the community college advisor will be able to put you in contact with a counselor at the college or university prior to your application, set up meetings for you, and write recommendations for you.

What must I do after the college/university officially accepts me?

You have received your letter of acceptance; now you must prepare for classes to start, if you haven't already done so. But prior to the time classes start, there are many other considerations, outside of your actual course work, which will help make your college experience successful.

Budget

One of the most important items you can examine at this time is your budget. You must determine what you can spend for food, clothing, housing, transportation, and recreation. Your tuition and fee expenditures are not controlled by you, and therefore they should be taken into consideration first, and the amount subtracted from the money that you can budget.

Careful examination of housing and transportation costs, as well as the expenses

necessary for tuition, fees, supplies and books, will determine how much you have left for other essentials such as utilities (if they are not included in your rent), food, clothing and recreation.

Housing

Colleges and universities have a wide range of housing available, with a variety of living arrangements. The dorm room is the most common housing arrangement for unmarried students. This may consist of a room with one to four occupants, with bathroom facilities ranging from one bathroom per room to a single bathroom on each floor of the dorm.

In addition to regular dorm rooms, in some colleges there are dorm spaces reserved for students in particular majors. It might be important to be a part of such a group in order to gain learning experiences. This should be looked into with your advisor.

Cooking facilities are usually limited; it is standard to allow no cooking in rooms, but there may be a kitchen available. This kitchen may be shared by a particular number of rooms on a floor or there may be only one kitchen for the whole building. Be sure to look into this, because if you wish to have traditional foods that are not readily available through restaurants or cafeterias, this facility may be one you will use on a regular basis. Also, it is important to know that foreign students use the kitchen on a regular basis to provide themselves with food which is not available elsewhere.

The institution's married housing facilities are another option. These facilities are usually on or near the campus, sometimes with regular bus service to or near the campus. The size of the apartments is usually determined by the number of people in your family. If you will have additional family members visiting or staying with you, these apartments may be very limiting.

Off-campus housing is another consideration. The college usually maintains a list of available housing. Most institutions do not in any way approve or inspect the housing on this list. It is up to the students to protect themselves from landlords who are either unethical or provide substandard living conditions. If a student is caught in a situation where the landlord is not providing appropriate utilities, or is in any other way not living up to the agreement between the renter and the landlord, the student should contact legal services on or off campus for help and advice. Remember that leases are hard to break. When signing a lease, be sure you understand all of its conditions, the requirements for yourself, and the responsibilities of the landlord. Be sure you have a copy of the lease you sign.

Transportation

Transportation to and from classes, library and other services and recreational opportunities should be looked into. The location of your housing may determine the mode of transportation you use. In some places, apartment complexes which rent regularly to college students include bus passes in the rental agreement. Other cities may have bus service for which the student may purchase a pass from the bus company. This usually cuts down on the actual expense you have for transportation to and from class. Student parking for a private car may not be located in the vicinity of your classes, while the bus service may leave you at the door.

When using a private car or truck for transportation, the student must purchase a parking permit allowing parking in certain areas on campus. If you are going to be dependent upon your private car for transportation, it is necessary that it be dependable. Continual

missing of classes because of breakdown of your auto may cause you to fail class.

Food

Living in a college community often means that there are many quick food stores. The careful shopper will clip coupons, shop at supermarkets, and avoid the small convenience stores. Budget enough money to meet nutritional demands. Vitamins may help in meeting these demands, as planning balanced meals is not always a priority for college students. Remember that a body in good condition will also provide a mind in good condition, and thus make studying easier.

Clothing and household necessities

Moving to a new community means finding new sources of clothing and household items. These items can be often obtained at garage sales, which are frequent at the end of each semester. Quite often at these garage sales you can purchase

necessities, such as pots, pans, and furniture, at a fraction of what they would cost new. Don't be afraid to buy used household items; when you leave college you can usually sell them, for the same price you paid when you bought them. Clothing also may be purchased in this way; visiting more affluent neighborhoods can provide clothing at a fraction of the cost you would pay for new clothes. Many items are like new. When there is a need to buy at retail stores, search for discount houses, brand-name warehouses, factory outlets, and such. These can be another source of amazing savings. When looking for bargains, be aware that something is only a bargain if you really need it.

Additional income

There are many opportunities for part-time work around a college. Many restaurants and other businesses hire students for part-time positions. Student services or the student employment office

on most campuses will usually have a list of such opportunities. In addition, you may just walk down a main street by campus and inquire if there is a need for part-time help. Know your class schedule, and precisely when you will be available for work. If you are married, your wife or husband may be looking for work. The university is one of the best places to start. The institution employs many spouses of students, and there is a high turn-over in these positions every term as students graduate.

Typing papers for students in the home is another way to make additional income. This enables the person to remain at home and have students bring work to the house. This of course depends on the person having good equipment and being a good typist. It also means long hours at the end of a term, when most term papers are due, and few jobs at the beginning of a term. This income is not steady, but enables the person to remain at home.

How do I choose my courses and instructors?

It is important to identify the requirements for graduation in your major and minor fields. Your academic advisor will be most helpful in this area. Recognize that some courses are taught only once each year. Should you not sign up for these courses at the right time, you might have to wait a full year. The reason you have to wait a year is so that you can start the series with the beginning course. Plan your required coursework for the full year. Be aware of the courses you are required to take which list prerequisites. Work closely with your advisor, and make sure you are taking courses required in your major area. The elective courses you take should be carefully chosen. Remember, you are planning for a career, not just getting a degree.

What will it take to be successful?

Determination and careful planning will be two of the most critical elements of making your stay at college successful. At the end of this handbook is a short list of recently published books designed to help students survive and succeed in college. Each of them costs less than $6.00; if they are not available in your campus bookstore, the store should be able to order them for you.

Study habits

When first attending a new institution, getting acquainted with the college facilities is important, but more important is the establishment of good study habits. The average student should spend three hours studying for each hour in class. Time for uninterrupted study is essential. The student may find the library a good place to study. Many college libraries have study carrels you can sign up for. These often have locked

drawers to keep your materials in. Look into this; it may be the best place for studying. Indian Studies programs or the Indian Club often provide a study room for students also. Studying specific coursework at specific times will help you avoid last-minute, all-night marathon studying sessions just before exams.

Libraries

The library is a place you need to become well acquainted with. Many colleges have small departmental libraries in specific disciplines. These libraries contain most of the materials needed for the specific field of study. There also may be materials which are only available through the main library. Microfilm and microfiche collections are often centrally located on campus and provide a wealth of current information; the ERIC collections are only one such source. Don't overlook these sources.

Social life

Social life for the college student should be planned. The American Indian Club often plays a major part in Indian students' social life. It provides the opportunity to become acquainted with other Indian students. The club usually will have some sort of get-acquainted meeting, as well as periodic events throughout the year.

There are many other activities which students can take advantage of. The student I.D. card often permits the use of various recreational facilities that provide activities such as swimming, handball, tennis, weight-lifting, and golf. The student I.D. also provides admission to many sports and entertainment events free of charge or at a reduced rate. The student newspaper usually publishes a listing of films, plays, sports, art shows, and other free activities. Families are also given access to these activities that would be costly outside of the college.

When attempting to meet your social needs, be aware that there are many other Indian students who may be alone and would enjoy participating with you in an activity, or maybe just a meal. The students' spouses should also be considered in the social activities as they also get lonesome. Getting acquainted with other couples on campus will alleviate this situation.

Finally, remember that Indian people have a sense of humor, and make sure you provide for that part of your personality. Don't be overcome with the seriousness that may surround you in college; your sense of humor is an important part of your survival as a person---treasure it, nurture it.

Taking care of your mind and body

Physical well-being is crucial to mental well-being and academic achievement. A well-cared-for body, receiving proper rest, food and exercise, will help tremendously as you work to succeed in your coursework. A body abused by

inactivity, drugs, alcohol, or improper diet will not function at its highest potential and will decrease the likelihood of a successful college career.

Being alone often becomes hard when you have been used to family interaction. The student should be aware of this and try to prevent loneliness by becoming acquainted with other students. A result of loneliness may be large telephone bills, since calling home to talk to family and friends is a good way to get over homesickness. If you find yorself in a situation where you need to talk to those at home, remember the specific times when rates are lower, i.e. after 11 P.M. and on weekends. Plan to touch base with your family and friends at specific times. Make arrangements to have everyone you wish to speak with at home at those times. A large telephone bill could be a major deterrent to staying and completing your coursework.

Learning to work with the system and take advantage of opportunities is essential to the student. One of the first things you will notice at college is that you are identified by a number, usually your Social Security number. A resulting loss of identity may be debilitating. This is only a record-keeping system and has nothing to do with you as a person. All students are treated this way.

The university system is designed to serve all individuals. It is designed to work with students and for students. It provides counseling, tutoring and services for those whose backgrounds may differ. The overall success of the institution depends on the success of the individual. Through diligence, determination and hard work, success can be achieved by all students. Take the opportunity to use the system, and do not be overcome by it. The institution will not adapt to you---you must become the adaptor, without losing your self-identity.

Helpful books

1. The College Survival Kit. 51 Proven Strategies for Success in Today's Competitive College World, by Irv Brechner. New York, Bantam Books, 1979. $2.95.
2. Student's Guide to Good Grades: Surviving the Undergraduate Jungle, by Kathy Crafts and Brenda Hauther. NY, Grove Press, 1976. $2.45.
3. Living on a Shoestring. A Survival Guide for Coping with Finances, Furnishings, Recipes, Rents and Roommates, Etc., by Mike Edelhart. Garden City, NY, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1980. $5.95.
4. The Simple Fool's Handbook to Cooking. A Manual for the College-Bound Gourmand, by Cliff MacGillivray. NY, Avon Books, 1979. $3.95.
5. The Pueblo Way - From High School to College, by John Noon. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 162 769).

6. The Navajo Way from High School to College, by John Noon. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 183 320).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Carol J. Minugh, a member of the Gros Ventre Tribe, was raised on the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana, and attended school in Dodson, Montana. She moved to Hoquiam, Washington in her junior year of high school and graduated from Hoquiam High School. She continued her formal education after years of being a waitress, cook, mill worker, and real estate saleswoman, and raising her four children. She attended Grays Harbor Community College in Aberdeen, Washington, where she began to recognize the problems Indian students have in being successful in institutions of higher education. As a result, she developed an Indian program while she attended GHC, and became the director of the program during her junior year, while working toward a B.A. degree at Evergreen State College. After completing her master's degree at Washington State University, Carol accepted a Rockefeller Fellowship in community college administration. This fellowship consisted of an internship as administrative assistant to the president of Central Arizona Community College. During this time she began her doctoral program in higher education administration at the University of Arizona, then transferred to Pennsylvania State University, where she completed her work in 1981. In 1978, Carol accepted a position at Ohio State University in the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, as the director of a national research project on vocational education for American Indians. Carol currently is employed as a Research Specialist at Ohio State University. Her primary interest is in ensuring that Indian people

have every opportunity to meet their social and economic goals in life, whether this involves higher education, vocational/technical education, work experience or expressing the natural talents of the individual.